

**What Parents have been saying about our programs for tots and children (including our camp) since 1973**

...Although our daughter knew absolutely no Spanish and despite the fact she joined a week late, she seemed to have blended in very smoothly and we thank you for that. We can see that she had an enjoyable and enriching experience. We are very excited that this is already her fourth language and that she seems to like it. Thank you for giving our daughter a wonderful summer experience.

Mr. & Mrs. Wokloff

I see how eager the children in the class are to learn. For them, learning French is play. I am a physician, and I know when the brain develops fastest. Since children absorb and retain information better when they are young, early teaching of language is very important. When children learn language early, they grasp concepts easier and their pronunciation is perfect. That is why I am sending my children to French for Tots.

Dr. Wilczewski

..It is the only program of its type that approaches language so naturally at such a young age. Children can sense how an adult feels about them. Mr. Thibaut really cares about the children. It shows, and they can feel it. Mr. Thibaut makes sure there are no competitive feelings in the class. Everyone gets a chance to excel.

Mrs. Berlino

This class is a lifetime investment in both fun and learning. What a wonderful time and a great way for any child to be introduced to French.

Mrs. Edwards

There is simply no other program like this in the city. It is a very well run program. At this age, it is a child's job in life to learn

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**MARKETPLACE**

**Bringing Up (Bilingual) Baby**

At my daughter's first Spanish class, she just sat there staring blankly at the instructor, not saying a word.

Of course, she was only six months old. "At this age, she's supposed to sit there like a potted plant," says François Thibaut, founder and director of The Language Workshop for Children in New York City. He assured me my daughter wasn't too young to learn another language. "Don't worry - she's taking it all in."

It isn't clear whether my baby will ever speak Spanish, but it is clear that plenty of parents would like their babies to learn a second language before they even know a first.

My first encounter with this phenomenon was the stroller jam on the first day of the semester at The Language Workshop for Children, on Manhattan's Upper East Side. When Langley Grace and I arrived at the school, we literally couldn't get in: dozens of strollers were stacked, piled and hung in the lobby and out the front door.



Mothers and nannies were jostling for stroller space, while other parents crowded the front desk to get their child onto a class roster.

What's going on here? Did some edict go out among these hard-charging parents - almost all of them older and affluent - about the latest brain research?

A growing number of brain studies indicate infants can learn a second language more easily if they are exposed to it before they learn to talk, in the period in which their brains are being wired. Infants are "citizens of the world, ready to learn any language," says neuroscientist Patricia Kuhl, co-author of a book on infant development, "The Scientist in the Crib." Up until the age of about six to 10 months, young babies can hear and respond to phonetic variations in any language, Dr. Kuhl says. Later in life, they will be able to speak the languages heard and learned in this early period spontaneously, as native speakers do.

At The Language Workshop for Children, Mr. Thibaut has been teaching French since 1973. He added Spanish in 1982. Mr. Thibaut figures he has taught at least 50,000 tots and says he is gratified that science is confirming his experience.

Mr. Thibaut is drawing a rather upscale crowd these days. Some of the notable parents include the radio personality Don Imus and Woody Allen.

Mr. Thibaut lays down the rules at the first class: absolutely no English can be uttered, in order to achieve "total immersion" for the baby. The goal, according to Mr. Thibaut, is

In Manhattan's Upper East Side, well-to-do parents line up around the block to enroll their infants and toddlers in François Thibaut's language classes. Here are some of his tips:

- **Start teaching the second language before the child starts to speak.** Before they start to speak words, children listen and store almost everything they hear. This is the prime of their "critical period" for absorbing language.

- **Have the child listen to songs in another language.** Songs are powerful teaching tools, conveying grammatical templates and delivering both emotion and entertainment.

- **After audio tapes, educational videos and CD-ROMs may be introduced.**

- **If a parent or caregiver speaks a second language, have him or her speak only that language to the child, starting in infancy.**

- **Don't hire a private tutor for the child before the age of 8 or 10.** Young children need the company of other children. Private tutors put too much stress on the younger ones.

- **Remember, for your child to sound like a native speaker, a native speaker must teach him or her.**

to "create an atmosphere of play and laughter, to spur spontaneous speech that builds natural fluency." The Thibaut Technique® takes into account "lookers, listeners and movers." "Children learn in different styles, so we have specially-designed action games, visual aids and songs."

Mr. Thibaut is encouraging. A baby "hears, understands, then speaks," he notes, reminding me that babies can't verbalize what they know. "You may get the impression Langley Grace isn't learning anything," he says "but just

because she doesn't have a printer working yet, don't conclude there's nothing in the computer."

Early exposure to a second language actually grows more connections in the baby's brain, researchers believe. "We can't say at what month you should start teaching a baby, but there's plenty of research to say the earlier the exposure to a foreign language the more beneficial," says Nancy Rhodes, spokeswoman for the National Network for Early Language Learning, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group.

The New York Times

**Education Life**

At French for Tots in Manhattan, François Thibaut teaches children how to speak French. His love of the children and enthusiasm for what he is teaching are legendary among New York parents.

As in many foreign-language programs for adults, every word spoken here by the instructor is in French. At a recent class, the children were taught the names of groceries: sugar, coffee, chocolate. The children were then asked to take a brightly colored miniature-size shopping cart and pick up the "groceries."

After a successful walk down the

"supermarket," the parents applaud the child's success and the happy "shopper" finally smiles too.

At 3 1/2, Maggie Mandel has been learning French for two years, nearly as long as she has been learning English. Her mother, Kimberly, enrolled Maggie in French because she wanted her to have the opportunity to be bilingual and because Mrs. Mandel had spent six years of her adolescence trying in master the language, which still eludes her.